(c) whether Government propose to make the provisions relating to issue of visa for Nigerians more stringent because of their involvement in criminal activities?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) Indian Missions/Posts abroad have issued 7908 and 9769 visas in 2004 and 2005 respectively to Nigerian nationals.

(b) and (c) The requisite information is being obtained from the Ministry of Home Affairs and will be tabled in the House as early as possible.

Russian scholars

2917. SHRIMATI HEMA MALINI: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a number of Russian scholars are working on India-related problems:

(b) if so, the details of those specific problems;

(c) in what manner India would be benefited by the results;

(d) whether Government are considering to invite those scholars; and

(e) if so, the time period thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI ANAND SHARMA): (a) to (e) Several academic institutions in Russia have scholars dedicated to India-related studies, aspects of which include Indian languages, literature and culture, philosophy and history, the Indian political system and socio-economic issues. India's foreign policy, international relations and Indo-Russian relations form other areas of interest for Russian scholars. Sustaining and consolidating Russian academia's linkages with India, continues to be one of the important elements of our overall diplomacy in Russia since interaction enhances the level of knowledge, understanding and appreciation of India, Institutionalised exchange programmes between some Russian and Indian institutes enable Russian scholars to visit India regularly in order to keep pace with fresh research, information and developments and to work closely with their Indian counterparts.

Mutual legal assistance treaty

2918. SHRI R. SHUNMUGASUNDARAM: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) is there a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT) entered into with Pakistan for investigation and arrest in Criminal matter; and

(b) the number of countries that have signed MLAT with India?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) No, Sir.

(b) India has signed Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT) in Criminal Matters with 23 countries. A list of the countries is as Statement.

Statement

List of countries regarding "Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty"

1. Switzerland
2. Turkey
3. United Kingdom
4. Canada
5. Kazakhstan
6. United Arab Emirates
7. Russia
8. Uzbekistan
9. Tajikistan
10. Ukraine
11. Mongolia
12. Thailand
13. France
14. Bahrain
15. South Korea
16. United States of America
17. Singapore
18. South Africa
19. Mauritius
20. Belarus
21. Kyrgyzstan
22. Kuwait
23. Spain